

# WAHI KAPU O PELE

## 'SACRED PLACE OF PELE'

Grade 4

Meet at Visitors Center

9:30-11:30a.m.



*No Kahiki mai ka wahine 'o Pele,  
Mai ka 'āina mai 'o Polapola,  
Mai ka pūnohu a Kāne,  
Mai ke ao lapa i ka lani.*

*The woman Pele comes from Kahiki,  
From the land of Polapola,  
From the rising mist of Kāne,  
From the clouds that move in the sky.*

### Introduction

There was a time in the mysterious past when the air was surrounded with spiritual beings and a thin veil divided the living from the dead, the natural from the supernatural. During that time Pele, goddess of the volcano, came to Hawai'i carrying her youngest and favorite sister Hi'iakaikapoliopole, as an egg.

### Essential Question:

**What does traditional knowledge tell us about the home of Pele?**

## Photo Analysis:



Painting By: Arthur Johnson



Painting By: Herb Kane

### **Who is Pele?**

*(goddess of the volcano)*

### **Where did she come from?**

*(Kahiki)*

### **What is Pele holding in her right hand?**

*(Hi'iaka)*

***"Pele, the sacred living deity of Hawai'i's volcanoes, controls the limitless power of creation through her perseverance, molten strength, and unearthly beauty. Her passion emanates from her ancient existence. Revered and honored is the fire goddess. She is my spiritual guardian and forever the heartbeat and soul, continuously giving life to her land and its people."***

(Pele Hanoa, August 8, 2004 (her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday)

### **Setting the stage:**

Pele traveled from the northern-most islands guided by her favorite brother Kamohoali'i who was also a guardian shark. Having traveled for many miles from Kahiki in search of a suitable home for her fire and family, Pele finally settled in the crater of Halema'uma'u at the summit of Kīlauea Volcano.

Pele personifies fire and volcanism in all its forms. The volcanic landscape is her handiwork. The poetic name for her is *Ka wahine 'ai honua*, the woman who devours the earth. She sends streams of molten lava flowing down the slopes of the island of Hawai'i, destroying everything in its path. The land trembles and the sky is afire with a crimson glow as her molten body moves across the land. Those present whisper in awe, "*'Ae, 'aia lā 'o Pele*, there is Pele".



## Location: Map Study- Historical, sacred Sites:



The traditional Hawaiian name for the Steam Vents/Steaming Bluffs area is?

which means “Sacred Woman” and refers to \_\_\_\_\_, the goddess of fire.

Nāhuku is the traditional name for?

Explain why you think it is important to preserve the traditional names of places?

## Determining the Facts: Mo‘olelo as living history

### 1) Pele and Kamapua‘a

Many Hawaiian stories speak of the relationships between Pele and other gods and humans. One story tells why Pele's home at the summit of Kīlauea is called Halema‘uma‘u, house of the ‘āma‘u fern.

The *kinolau* (body form) of the pig god Kamapua‘a can be seen as a fern or fish. Kamapua‘a also appeared as a man. Kamapua‘a embodies many things in nature like the mist or rain. When he came to Kīlauea to woo Pele, she rejected his love and cried out at him, "*A‘ohe ‘oe kanaka, he pua‘a ‘oe*, you are not a man, you are a pig!"

### Mo'olelo Continued:

He was insulted beyond words and an angry battle ensued between them. Pele hurled bolts of fire and molten lava. Kamapua'a brought down torrential rains to douse the fires of Pele. The battle raged for a great period of time, each trying to out do the other. Kamapua'a quickly turned himself into the 'āma'u fern and surrounded her fiery home. To this day we remember the battle between Pele and Kamapua'a and is one story about how Halema'uma'u got its name.

## 2) Ho'okupu:

Ho'okupu are gifts or offerings. Some types of ho'okupu that are given to Pele are 'āma'u, pork, red fish, banana, 'ōhi'a lehua blossoms, and red 'ōhelo berries that grow near her domain.

Today, many people bring ho'okupu to Halema'uma'u Crater. Sometimes, the offerings are inappropriate because they are not traditional like a prayer, chant, dance, traditional food or lei made of native materials.

Look for examples of inappropriate offerings at the Halema'uma'u Overlook.

**What things do you see at the overlook that could be considered inappropriate?**



### E Pele

E Pele, e Pele ka'uka'ulī ana	Pele, Pele, hissing along
E Pele, e Pele hua'ina hua'ina	Pele, Pele, bursting forth
E Pele e Pele 'oni luna 'oni luna	Pele, Pele, moving upward
E Pele e Pele 'oni lalo 'oni lalo	Pele, Pele, moving downward
E Pele e Pele a'o kuli pe'e nui	Pele, Pele, creeping on her knees
He inoa no Pele	In honor of Pele



### 3) 'Ōhi'a-Lehua

The red 'ōhi'a lehua is a favorite flower of Pele. According to the mo'olelo, picking these blossoms will bring the rain. Another story tells about a handsome man, named 'Ōhi'a who rejected Pele's love. He was in love with a girl named Lehua. Pele turned him into the 'ōhi'a lehua tree to punish him. Lehua wept because she could not find 'Ōhi'a. Lehua was changed into the red blossoms and placed on the tree. 'Ōhi'a and Lehua remain together until today.

**What other colors of 'ōhi'a lehua flowers have you seen?**



### 4) 'Ōhelo

The 'ōhelo plant is unique to Hawai'i. One mo'olelo tells us that the 'ōhelo was sacred to Pele and that the fruiting branches were offered as a sign of respect. People did not come to Kīlauea or eat the fruit without making an offering to Pele first. The 'ōhelo was sacred to Pele because it represented the flesh and bones of a younger sister whose name was Ka'ōhelo.

**Why was the 'ōhelo sacred to Pele?**

### 5) How does this hotel guest book entry describe volcanic activity?

*We descended into the crater. Pele revealed herself in robes of awful majesty. O goddess of Hawaiian Lore, enshrouded in the mysteries of eternity, who may know the secrets of thy heart? What scientist may wrest from thy creation or know from whence thou art?*

(Volcano House Hotel Ledger, Edward Smith, 9 August 1885.)

## **Scientific Evidence**

According to USGS geologist, Don Swanson, the geological evidence that we see today, links to the stories told by the Hawaiian people about historical eruptions. “I’ve found, at least to my satisfaction, that some of the most important Hawaiian chants and stories describe some of Kīlauea’s past volcanic events, including explosions, the collapse of the top of the volcano to form the caldera about 500 years ago, and some of the large lava flows. It has been the source of immense satisfaction to make a connection between the oral history and the geologic history”. Sometime before 1000 A.D. Kīlauea volcano blasted skyward in an eruption so massive it sent rocks and dust as much as 18 miles into the air. The cloud of debris may have been seen on Maui, said Don Swanson, scientist-in-charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory. And the eruption may have changed the way Hawaiians viewed

Kīlauea, ushering in the new volcano goddess Pele, said Hawaiian cultural consultant Kepā Maly.

For several years, geologists have known about fist-size rocks shot through the air, different from surrounding rocks, lying on the ground south of Kīlauea, Swanson said. In August, geologists took a closer look. “What we found surprised, even shocked us,” Swanson said. About five miles from the summit, they found a rock weighing 4.3 pounds. At six miles from the summit, they found one weighing nearly 3 pounds.

The eruption of Kulanaokuaiki (600-1,000 AD) is an event that may help explain the correlation between two deities. “Everyone has heard of the volcano goddess Pele, but not everyone knows that she was sometimes called a “malihini”. Before her, was the volcano god, ‘Ailā’au. His name means “forest eater” and he was relatively peaceful. Pele was more violent and drove ‘Ailā’au away. Was it this eruption or a different event that lead to the rise of Pele and fall of ‘Ailā’au?” said, Maly.

According to Don Swanson, one thing we know for sure, is that Kīlauea has been very active since that time period!

## **Conclusion:**

**Lets refer back to our guiding question, What does traditional knowledge tell us about the home of Pele?**

### **Research and Information Sites:**

Pele and Hi’iaka, Nathaniel B. Emerson

Pele, goddess of Hawai’i’s Volcanoes, Herb Kawainui Kane

Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park Website: <http://nps.gov/havo>, [www.efieldtrips.org/havo](http://www.efieldtrips.org/havo)

Hawaiian Volcano Observatory Website: <http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov>

United States Geological Survey Website: <http://volcanoes.usgs.gov>

Volcano World Website: <http://volcano.und.nodak.edu/vw.html>

Mo'olelo and Science

**Vocabulary** – From the word list below, find the word that best describes each definition. Write that word in the space provided.

Caldera, ho'okupu, kinolau, wahi kapu, mo'olelo, Kamohoali'i, Pele, 'Ailā'au, Kamapua'a, Halema'uma'u,

Definitions

goddess of the volcano \_\_\_\_\_

traditional story or explanation about people, events, or places \_\_\_\_\_

a large crater formed when the top of a volcano collapses \_\_\_\_\_

male deity who lived at Kīlauea before Pele \_\_\_\_\_

sacred place \_\_\_\_\_

crater that is the home of Pele \_\_\_\_\_

red fern frond, pig, red fish, 'ōhelo berries, banana, 'ohi'a lehua flowers \_\_\_\_\_

the pig god \_\_\_\_\_

Body form of Kamapua'a, could be a pig, fern, fish \_\_\_\_\_

guardian shark who led Pele to Hawai'i \_\_\_\_\_

Linking Tradition to Science

1. On the lines provided, write the scientific occurrence that you think this mo'olelo excerpt is referring to:

*When Pele stamps her feet the earth shakes.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Pele revealed herself in awful majesty.* \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Climate Change Connection: Write your own example of a *mo'olelo* to describe a scientifically based occurrence like the effects of climate change. Think about how an ancestor might account for rising sea levels, coral reef bleaching, or a native bird species or plant becoming extinct because its habitat has now become too hot, too cold, too wet, or too dry.

## Work Sheet Answers

### Definitions

goddess of volcanoes Pele

traditional story or explanation about people, events, or places mo'olelo

a large crater formed when the top of a volcano collapses caldera

male deity who lived at Kīlauea before Pele 'Ailā'au

sacred place wahi kapu

crater that is the home of Pele Halemauma'u

red fern frond, pig, red fish, 'ohelo berries, banana, 'ōhi'a lehua flowers ho'okupu

the pig god Kamapua'a

Body form of Kamapua'a; could be a pig, fern, fish kinolau

guardian shark that led Pele to Hawai'i Kamohoali'i

### Linking Tradition to Science

On the lines provided, write the scientific occurrence for these mo'olelo.

*When Pele stamps her feet the earth shakes.* Earthquakes

*Pele revealed herself in awful majesty.* Eruptions or lava flowing

*Global warming/climate change paragraph: answers will vary.*